



Advocacy and Action  
for Connecticut's  
Mental Health

**Testimony before the Appropriations Committee  
March 2, 2021  
DMHAS BUDGET HEARING**

**H.B. No. 6439 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2023, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.**

**DAVID GEDRAITIS**

Good morning/afternoon/evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is David Gedraitis and I am a registered voter in Waterbury.

I am here to testify regarding H.B. No. 6439 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET

I moved into my own apartment after being in CT Valley Hospital (CVH) for 8 years. I went to DMHAS services for meds and found the Drop In Center in Waterbury and self-help groups at Advocacy, Writing group, dual diagnosis, hearing voices and WRAP program and other helpful groups. I was learning social skills. The goal of therapy is to learn to think for oneself. It was a challenge. Counselors and doctors and other members were all there for me. I won a Jim Mathis award from DMHAS for my recovery work. I had PTSD, dual diagnosis of schizoaffective disorder. The doctors and DMHAS staff were so caring and inspiring and the psychiatric nurse helped a lot.

My story illustrates how important mental health community supports and services are to acquire stability. I am able to live in

my own apartment and contribute to mental health advocacy and my community. I ask that you **increase** funding to DMHAS and community non-profits. I hope you continue to fund them so that they keep on helping me and others to benefit.

I also ask that you consider funding for important Peer Respite in the 5 DMHAS regions. Peer Respite may have very well helped keep me out the hospital if they had been available in Connecticut. People with lived experience in the mental health field can staff the Peer Respite and should be certified in Intentional Peer Support. They can help someone get on the right path without costly hospitalization.

Please fund them in the amount of six million dollars the first year, and five million in subsequent years for the starting and continuing operations of five peer respites. The five respites should be allocated one per DMHAS region.

Thank you for listening to my testimony.

David Gedraitis  
Waterbury CT